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SUBJECT: SIERRA LEONE- TALKING POINTS FOR DECEMBER 14
BRIEFING/CONSULTATIONS

¶1. This is an action cable. See paragraph 2.

¶2. USUN is instructed to draw from the following talking points for the December 14 consultations on Sierra Leone.

Begin points:

-- The United States thanks Executive Representative Victor Angelo for his thorough briefing and for his exceptional leadership of UNIOSIL over the last year.

-- The United States once again congratulates the Government and people of Sierra Leone for their successful parliamentary and presidential elections, which were relatively peaceful, free, and fair. We thank UNIOSIL and UNDP for the extensive role they played in supporting the elections.

-- The United States agrees with the Secretary General's report that Sierra Leone is still in a critical period. The 2007 general elections revealed some deep-seated political divides. We commend former President Kabbah, President Koroma, UNIOSIL, and the security forces of Sierra Leone for the steps they took to reduce tensions, intimidation, and violence in the run up to the elections. We were pleased by President Koroma's reconciliation campaign following the elections.

-- The 2008 local elections will be another key test for building a stable democratic state in Sierra Leone. The Government of Sierra Leone has requested additional technical assistance for these elections. A drawdown of UNIOSIL prior to the 2008 local elections should be conditioned upon the security and stability in country and should not signal a lack of commitment from the international community toward Sierra Leone's democracy. We agree UNIOSIL's mandate should continue until after the conclusion of 2008 local elections and the peaceful start to the post electoral period.

-- The United States remains concerned about the low operational capacity of the Sierra Leone security forces and the high rate of youth unemployment, both of which have a negative impact on the country's internal security. We urge the Government of Sierra Leone to continue to work with UNIOSIL and the Peacebuilding Commission to address these problems.

-- We call on the Government of Sierra Leone to complete SSR and downsize its armed forces to create a more professional force with greater capacity.

-- We urge the Government of Sierra Leone and the Government of Guinea to resolve in a peaceful manner their dispute over the border town of Yenga.

-- We urge Sierra Leone to increase its efforts to fight corruption in order to strengthen its institutions of governance, build public support for government initiatives, encourage investment and private sector growth, and to manage its resources more efficiently.

-- The United States strongly supports efforts to strengthen the role and independence of the Anti-Corruption Commission and urges the Government to accelerate the review and implementation of the National Anti-Corruption Strategy.

-- The United States is encouraged by the progress made in strengthening the rule of law. We fully support the Justice Sector Project, funded by the Peacebuilding Fund, which aims at strengthening the judicial system and the Family Support Unit of the police.

-- The United States commends the establishment of the Human Rights Commission, one of the key TRC recommendations, and encourages the Government of Sierra Leone to continue to make progress on the human rights situation in Sierra Leone. In this regard, we urge the rapid development and implementation of the National Action Plan for Human Rights.

-- We are encouraged by the cooperation between the Government of Sierra Leone and the Peacebuilding Commission in identifying four priority areas of assistance and in developing the Peacebuilding Cooperation Framework. We look forward to tangible progress by the PBC in promoting sustainable peacebuilding that builds on existing efforts.

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